

# Exploring Setting

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The **setting** of a story serves different functions in the action and the emotional effect it has on the reader. In some stories the setting might almost be considered a "character" itself.

## HOW SETTING FUNCTIONS IN A SHORT STORY

Setting works in many important ways in the short story:

*Provides a backdrop for the action* First, setting provides a physical background for the action of the story—such as on an ocean liner at sea, in a remote jungle, or on a farm in New England.

*Establishes atmosphere* Setting often sets a mood for the story—such as the romantic mood created by a full moon, the alienation of a busy city, or the exoticness of a foreign land.

*Shapes character and action* Setting can also provide a background environment that shapes the attitudes and actions of characters in the story—such as the country boy seeing the "big city" for the first time, or the rich character who suddenly finds himself lost in a tough neighborhood.

*Reflects character psychology* In some cases, the setting even symbolically reflects the inner feelings of the characters or the working of the story conflict—such as the thunderstorm that parallels a character's inner turmoil, or the summer heatwave that accompanies the rising tensions of the story.

## HOW DO AUTHORS CREATE SETTING?

Two powerful techniques that authors use to create settings are the use of details and sense images.

*Details* By building their description of settings with realistic details, authors make their story seem more believable—such as using actual street names when setting a story in a real city, or choosing authentic details to depict a setting set in a foreign country.

*Sense images* By describing settings in images that appeal to the reader's senses, the author creates a vivid atmosphere that readers can associate with settings in their own experience—such as the smell of bread baking in a farmhouse kitchen, the feel of swimming in cool lake water, or the sound of rain falling on a tin roof.

## QUESTIONS TO ASK WHILE YOU ARE READING A SHORT STORY:

1. What physical backdrop does the setting provide for the story? Does it create atmosphere? shape characters' actions? reflect inner psychology?
2. What techniques did the author use to create the setting? Does the author use details and images that speak to the reader's senses?